LIII.—*Letters, Extracts, Notices, &c.*

The following letters, addressed to the Editor, have been received:—

Kilmory, Loch-Gilp-Head, N.B.,
August 28th, 1893.

Sir,—It may interest some of your readers who note the occurrences of migrants on their shores to know that a Goldfinch (*Carduelis elegans*) was observed in the island of North Uist on May 21st, 1893, by my son Arthur, who resides there. From what his gardener states there was probably another in its company.

My son also sends me a Tree-Sparrow (*Passer montanus*), which, although common in Barra and South Uist, had not previously, I believe, been obtained in North Uist.

I am,
Yours &c.,
John Campbell-Orde.

University Museum, Oxford,
August 20th, 1893.

Sir,—To the last number of 'The Ibis,' I contributed a paper "On a Point in the Mechanism of the Bill in Birds," being then under the impression that the peculiar movement therein described had not previously been recorded. Had I looked more carefully into Bronn's 'Thier-Reich,' I should have found both a figure and a description of the interesting phenomenon. The fig. (1), Taf. iv., is that of a section of the skull of a Snipe, the extent of the upward movement of the bill, which I endeavoured to describe, being indicated by dotted lines as in my figure. On reference to the description (p. 362) it will be seen that my interpretation of the phenomenon is exactly the same as Selenka's. Perhaps the only redeeming feature about this unfortunate piece of carelessness is that I have now brought the matter before non-German readers of 'The Ibis,' whilst had not the above-mentioned passage escaped my notice my paper would never have been written.

I am, Sir,
Yours &c.,
W. P. Pycraft.

Eton College Museum, Eton, Windsor,
September 30th, 1893.

Sir,—I am anxious to form a collection of British Birds "*in skin*" for the use of the Eton boys, and shall be glad to receive contributions from any of my brother members of the B. O. U. who may take an interest in the project.

It is proposed to include in the series examples of all the species mentioned in Saunders's 'Manual,' but I do not intend to have only what are called "British-killed" specimens. Examples from any part of the range of the species, if correctly localized and dated, will be quite acceptable; so that, in the case of stragglers from the New World, our American friends may be able to help us, if so inclined.

We have already in this Museum a series of British Birds, mounted in separate glass cases, most of which were given to the School by the late Provost Thackeray, of King's College, Cambridge. Among them are a certain number of rare birds, some of which are specially mentioned by Yarrell, who was a correspondent of the Provost.

There are a number of deficiencies in this series also, which I should like to make good, and of which I shall be delighted to supply a list on application.

It is obvious, however, that a collection of skins in cabinets will be much more useful for examination and comparison than the mounted specimens, so I hope that I shall be able, with the help specially of any Old Etonians who may be members of the B. O. U., to form a good series of English Birds "in skin." I am, Sir,

Yours &c.,
W. L. Sclater.

Sir,—The statements concerning the discovery of the nest of the Snow-Bunting in Banffshire in the 'Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club' for June last are not quite correct. The information afforded by the gentleman mentioned, who is lessee of the forest, may have led, and probably did lead indirectly, to the discovery. But the nest of the Snow-Bunting was not found by Mr. W. Ogilvie Grant. Both the precise locality and the nest were discovered by Mr. Hinxman, of the Geological Survey of Scotland, and Mr. Eagle Clarke, of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, as has been related with strict accuracy in the 'Annals of Scottish Natural History,' No. 7, p. 181, July 1893. It will thus be seen that the earlier record is not the one which can claim priority as its right, on account of the inaccuracies which I have now pointed out.

I am always glad to hear of any new discoveries in connection with Scottish ornithology, but I consider it would be graceful to place the acknowledgments to the credit of those who *both gave the information and found the nest.*

In addition to the above remarks, I desire to draw attention to facts of which this gentleman takes no notice, viz. the earlier records of the breeding of the Snow-Bunting in other parts of Scotland. Amongst them I may mention one in the pages of 'The Ibis' (1889, p. 137) which is worthy of acknowledgment, and also two previous occasions on which Mr. Hinxman and Mr. Peach, of the staff of the Geological Survey of Scotland, found the young in Sutherland *. The former gentleman also found the young in West Ross in the following season. I am, Sir,

Yours &c.,
JOHN A. HARVIE-BROWN.

Turacin.—In 'Nature' of June 29th appears a report of the lecture recently delivered by Prof. A. H. Church before the Royal Institution upon turacin—a remarkable animal pigment containing copper. Turacin is found in the crimson-coloured portions of the plumage of certain genera of Musophagidæ—*Turacus, Gallirex,* and *Musophaga.* The peculiar interest of the pigment lies in two of its properties, (1) that it is soluble in water and (2) that it contains a definite proportion of copper. In this latter respect turacin is almost unique—the only other copper-containing organic compound known being hæmocyanin, the blue respiratory pigment occurring in the blood of many molluscs and arthropods. That turacin is such a definite compound is indicated by the fact that the pigment collected from birds of the different species yields a similar and constant proportion of copper. According to Prof. Church its composition is as follows: carbon 53·69; hydrogen 4·6; copper 7·01; nitrogen 6·96; and oxygen 27·74; corresponding pretty closely to the empirical formula C_{82} H_{81} N_9 O_{32}. As already mentioned, the pigment is soluble in water. Its solubility is increased by the presence of an alkali; while excess of acid at once brings about its precipitation in the form of a non-crystalline substance of a dark crimson colour and semi-metallic lustre. Regarding the origin of the copper Prof. Church draws attention to the very wide distribution of traces of this metal amongst plants, while in banana-fruits, one of the favourite foods of the Musophagidæ, it exists in quite appreciable quantities. We believe that the fact of the solubility in water of the pigment in the wing-feathers of the Touracous was first discovered by the late Jules Verreaux, of Paris, during his expedition to the Cape Colony in 1825–30. Prof. Church, however, was the first investigator who ascertained the presence of copper in turacin.

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* See 'A Vertebrate Fauna of Sutherland, Caithness, and West Cromarty,' by T. E. Buckley and J. A. Harvie-Brown (Douglas, Edinb. 1887), p. 140.

Notes on the Birds of Chili.—Mr. Edwyn C. Reed, C.M.Z.S. (Baños de Canquenes, Santiago, Chili), in acknowledging the receipt of a copy of the 'New List of Chilian Birds,' sends us the following notes:—

"*Turdus fuscatus* and *Mimus triurus* are found near Mendoza, but I have never seen Chilian specimens.

"Besides the Hirundinidæ you mention there is a *Progne*, called by Philippi and Landbeck '*P. furcata*,' which has been shot several times in Chili."

This is, no doubt, *Progne furcata* of Arg. Orn. (i. p. 24) and of Sharpe (Cat. B. x. p. 175). But Dr. Philippi (P. Z. S. 1868, p. 531) has stated that he does not believe this to be a Chilian species. The locality, "Chili (*Bridges*)," given for specimen *b* in the 'Catalogue of Birds' (*l. s. c.*) is not trustworthy, because Bridges also collected largely near Mendoza (*cf.* P. Z. S. 1847, p. 28), and his specimens from that district were mixed up by Cuming, who was his agent in England, with those from Chili.

Mr. Reed considers that *Chrysomitris uropygialis* and *Pseudochloris aureiventris* should be classed as "summer visitants," and not as "residents," unless it be in Tarapacá, and doubts the occurrence of *Molothrus bonariensis* in Chili. *Elainea albiceps* is probably a "resident."

Eustephanus galeritus is, according to Mr. Reed, a "regular summer visitor." "A pair built a nest in a garden in Santiago a few years ago, and I saw plenty in the south all last autumn." *Oreotrochilus leucopleurus* is also a "summer visitor, as far as Atacama, but may be resident in Tarapacá."

The Maguari Stork (*Euxenura maguari*) is "certainly a resident, but not common."

"A species of *Dendrocygna* is an occasional visitant."

"*Oreophilus ruficollis* is resident; I have shot it in summer and in winter."

Mr. Perkins's Progress in the Sandwich Islands.—Mr. R. C. L. Perkins, whose "Notes on Collecting in Kona, Hawaii" appeared in the January number of 'The Ibis' (*suprà*, p. 101), after leaving that island continued his explorations in Oahu, the island on which Honolulu, the capital, stands; but, unfortunately, without meeting with either of the species of *Hemignathus*, *H. lichtensteini* and *H. lucidus* (*cf.* Ibis, 1890, p. 189), which formerly inhabited it, but which appear to have become extinct since the time of Townsend and Deppe. He subsequently transferred his operations to the island of Molokai, whence he has written that, in spite of the terrible weather—days of continuous rain alternating with fog—that made reaching the higher mountain-ranges, and still more doing any work there, a matter of the greatest difficulty, he had procured a good many birds, and among them specimens of the new species of *Acrulocercus* lately described by Mr. Rothschild, though it seems to be far from abundant. As Mr. Perkins, however, is a general collector, his labours have been highly useful in other branches of zoology, and very considerable series of all orders of insects have been sent home by him. The examination of these collections will doubtless throw great light on the important questions of the origin and development of the very peculiar fauna of the Sandwich Islands, which, like that of so many other island groups, is in danger of losing, if indeed it has not already lost, some of its most interesting types.

The Bird-collection in the University Museum, Cambridge.—In the Annual Report of the Museums and Lecture Rooms Syndicate of the University of Cambridge (for 1892) we are informed by the Strickland Curator, Dr. Gadow, that the "chief event of the last year, as regards the Bird-Museum was the presentation by Mrs. W. B. Farr of the magnificent collection of skins of Indian Birds formed by her late husband. More than 1300 specimens, representing about 322 species, had been brought together by the late W. B. Farr, Esq., Comptroller of Accounts, Bengal Railways, chiefly from Bengal, the North-western Provinces, and the slopes of the Himalayas. All the specimens were correctly labelled, but unfortunately not a few had suffered from time and insects. However, no fewer than 121 species were not previously represented in the University Collection, among which are the extremely rare Central Asiatic bird *Ibidorhynchus struthersi*, the tiny Hawk *Hierax eutolmos*, and *Ithaginis cruentus*. Owing to this welcome influx of skins, which, by the way, strains the capacity of the available space in the Bird Room to its utmost extent, the Indian Avifauna is now very well represented.

"The whole collection of birds in the museum consists now of about 21,500 specimens, representing no fewer than 5700 species, *i. e.* about half the number of species at present known."

The Collection of Austro-Hungarian Birds at Vienna.—Dr. Lorenz calls our attention to a serious error in our account of the series of Austro-Hungarian birds in the Vienna Museum (above, p. 459) which we have great pleasure in correcting. The number of unmounted specimens was incorrectly stated to be 10,900. It should have been 466, the former number being merely the "registry number" of the last specimen.

Dr. P. Leverkühn.—Dr. Paul Leverkühn, C.M.Z.S., has been appointed Director of the Scientific Institutions and Library of H.R.H. Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and will reside at Sophia, the capital of Bulgaria.

List of Ornithological Works in course of Publication and Dates of the last Parts issued.

Bronn (H. G.). Klassen und Ordnungen des Thier-Reichs. Vögel. Von Hans Gadow. Lief. 44, 45 (1893).

Dubois (A.). Faune Illustrée des Vertébrés de la Belgique. Oiseaux. Livr. 148 (1893).

Elliot (D. G.). A Monograph of the *Pittidæ*, or Family of Ant-Thrushes. Second edition. Part I. (April 1893).

Giglioli (E. H.) and Manzella (A.). Iconografia dell' Avifauna Italica. Fasc. 50 (1892).

Lilford (Lord). Coloured Figures of the Birds of the British Islands. Part XXIV. (June 1893).

Menzbier (M. A.). Dr. N. A. Severtzow. Ornithologie du Turkestan. Livr. 3 (1891).

Meyer (A. B.). Abbildungen von Vogel-Skeletten. Lief. XVI.–XVIII. (1892).

Mosley (S. L.). British Birds; their Nests and Eggs. No. 69 (1892).

Nehrling (H.). North American Birds. Part VIII. (1893).

Pleske (Th.). Ornithographia Rossica. Band II. Lief. 5 (1891).

Sharpe (R. B.). Monograph of the *Paradiseidæ*, or Birds of Paradise. Part II. (1893).

Sharpe (R. B.) and Wyatt (C. W.). A Monograph of the *Hirundinidæ*. Part XV. (August 1892).

Sundman (C.). Finska Fogelägg.—Eggs of Finnish Birds. Livr. IX. (1888).

Wilson (Scott B.) and Evans (A. H.). Aves Hawaiienses: The Birds of the Sandwich Islands. Part IV. (January 1893).